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INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L KABUL 003632

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SUBJECT: BMI WORKGROUP AUGUST 10: IRANIANS JOIN THE TEAM

REF: KABUL 3486

Classified By: Ambassador Ronald Neumann for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

11. (C) A Border Management Initiative (BMI) Working Group meeting was held on August 10. The Embassy of Iran sent two representatives for the first time after receiving an Afghan invitation: First Secretary Ali Majidi Soraky, and Drugs Liaison Officer Hashem Zayyem.

12. (C) The Deputy Minister of Finance, Customs and Revenue Ibrahimi had extended the invitation and welcomed the Iranian representatives. As part of the BMI WG agenda, a brief informal presentation was given on Border Management Initiative (BMI) activities, focusing on projects along the Iranian border, where the Iranian Embassy had previously expressed sensitivities. Attendees expressed hope that Iranian participation in BMI meetings would foster an understanding that the BMI is addressing concerns shared by both Afghanistan and Iran (counter-narcotics, security, smuggling, and trade facilitation). There was also discussion of the Iranian offer made during the February 27 - 28 2006 German - sponsored DOHA II conference to provide training to Afghan customs. The German representative to the BMI Working Group was asked to follow up on the Iranian offer when configuring the Iranian help already being provided for the construction of 25 Afghan border posts, that they might want to offer support in funding the new Afghan immigration and customs facilities at Zaranj. Soraky, responded positively to the briefing, said he would look at what was being done and would consider supporting infrastructure efforts at Zaranj.

13. (C) In a separate action, the Afghan Ministry of Finance announced that, in response, to earlier suggestions, they

would be sending full police and customs teams to Zaranj to begin collecting customs duties. It is unknown how the local populace and government will react.

NEUMANN